A Statement of Government Policy on the Status of Women in Manitoba

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Manitoba

Introduction:

Successive governments of Manitoba have undertaken a wide range of initiatives intended to ensure that women enjoy equal rights, freedoms and opportunities within our society.

Manitoba, as a community, shares the belief that no person should be discriminated against or disadvantaged as a result of his or her sex.

Nonetheless, there has not, in the past, been a clear statement of Government Policy on the Status of Women in Manitoba. Such a policy, clearly stated, will act as a foundation and guideline for all policies, programs and activities of government and will ensure a clear understanding of the values and objectives that Manitobans and their government share.

This Statement of Government Policy articulates eight fundamental principles that will form the basis of government actions and programs affecting the status of women in Manitoba.

The Policy of the Government of Manitoba on the Status of Women

As a community, the people of Manitoba share the belief that all aspects of our lives — as citizens, as parents and members of families, as employers and employees — will be enriched when both men and women have equal access to security, safety and opportunities to excel.

The policy of the Government of Manitoba reflects that belief. Our policy is based on **eight fundamental principles.**

■ **Abuse of women is unacceptable in Manitoba. Family violence is a crime.**

The government, in its actions and programs, will move to continue to enhance the protections and assistance available to victims of abuse and to bring the full force of the law to bear on the prevention and elimination of abuse throughout Manitoba, recognizing that — in addition to physical abuse — threats and intimidation are also abuse and are unacceptable.

■ **Discrimination against women, on the basis of their sex, is unacceptable in Manitoba.**

The government, in its actions and programs, will move to prohibit and to hold accountable those who practice such discrimination. In its actions, all parts of government must act to avoid and remove all forms of discrimination against women. In our actions, we will treat harrassment and sexual exploitation of women as among the most serious forms of discrimination and will respond accordingly.

- **Government and the community share a responsibility to provide protections and security for those who, in the past, were denied the opportunity to become secure and independent.**

  The government, in its actions and programs, will respond to the special needs of those who, because they were denied opportunities, now find themselves vulnerable or in need. In fulfilling this responsibility, government will provide leadership to the community as a whole to ensure that this shared, community-wide responsibility is appropriately discharged.

- **Terms and conditions of employment and of participation in education should recognize the responsibilities for child rearing that parents share in Manitoba.**

  The government, in its actions and programs, will provide leadership in the creation of employment and education environments that are responsive to and can accommodate responsibilities that both men and women share as parents. This will include leadership in the provision of appropriate child care services to meet the needs of working parents.

- **Women should enjoy equal access to a full range of career options and choices within the Manitoba economy.**

  The government, in its actions and programs, will strive to ensure that women have full access to all of the career and employment options that exist in the Manitoba economy. The government believes that this must entail full access to the preparation, education and training necessary to compete effectively in the labour market and the marketplace as a whole. This must include a sensitivity to and recognition of the value of the contribution that women already make to the community and the economy. The government recognizes the value of the contribution that women make to the life of Manitoba as homemakers and through their leadership in the voluntary sector.

- **Women ought, as a matter of right, to enjoy equal access to and equal treatment within education at all levels.**

  The government is involved in all aspects of education in Manitoba, from child care to vocational retraining. In its actions and programs government must strive to ensure that access, environment and the subject matter covered in education at all levels encourages full participation by women. Government actions must enhance awareness and understanding of all of the options that are available to women in Manitoba.

- **Women should have access to enhanced participation in decision-making both to ensure that women's viewpoints are taken into account and to ensure that the community as a whole can benefit from the abilities, wisdom and insight that women can contribute at a decision-making level.**

  The government, in its actions and programs, will provide leadership in ensuring wider opportunities for women to participate in decision-making. This shall include ensuring greater participation by women in decision-making throughout government, within the legal system and other public institutions. Through its example, government will encourage greater participation of women at the decision-making levels of the other organizations and institutions in our province.

- **Government efforts to achieve the goals of this policy will be most effective if they are carried out in partnership with individual women and women's groups throughout Manitoba.**

  The government, in its actions and programs, will strive to build, maintain and enhance the influence and participation of women and women's groups throughout the community. This must involve ongoing consultation with individual women and women's groups to ensure that they have an effective voice in and influence on government policies and programs.

Conclusion:

The eight principles articulated here reflect the advice that women throughout Manitoba have contributed through consultation with the Government of Manitoba.

The principles shall be taken into account in the actions and programs of all departments and agencies of government in Manitoba. Using these principles as a guideline will ensure that government's actions reflect the belief that Manitobans share — that our entire community benefits when men and women enjoy equal access to safety, security and opportunities to excel.

A detailed action plan, itemizing measures being undertaken throughout government in accordance with these principles, has been prepared and made public. Periodic progress reports — detailing specific measures and achievements — will be made to ensure that the community as a whole has the broadest possible understanding of and opportunity to participate in these actions.